



The function of local government autonomy in improving community-based security governance in Zamfara state: a secondary analysis

U. A. Arabo¹ and S. Gazali²

¹ Federal University, Gusau, Zamfara State, Nigeria

² Zamfara State University, Talata Mafara, Zamfara State, Nigeria

Correspondence Author: U. A. Arabo

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Abstract

In Zamfara State, Nigeria, banditry and kidnapping are making life very unsafe, which makes it challenging for the government to do its job well. This study looks at how providing local governments with greater autonomy could enable them to collaborate with communities to solve these security problems. The research investigates the challenges that Zamfara State's local governments confront, such as not having enough money and having to accept directives from the central government. It does this by using mostly existing data, such as government reports, academic studies, news stories and NGO publications, as well as a few targeted interviews with local officials. It also looks at successful local security measures in other Nigerian states, including community policing in Lagos, to see what Zamfara State may learn from them. The results suggest that local governments need more leeway to come up with solutions that work for their communities, such as local peace committees. The study advocates for reforms to empower local councils and build links between communities and government. By shedding light on an ignored sector of public administration, this work offers practical solutions for policymakers in Zamfara State and beyond, showing how local governance may make a difference in conflict zones.

Keywords: Local government, Autonomy, Community security, Zamfara state, Public administration, Decentralization

1. Introduction

The rising violence in Zamfara State, Nigeria, which includes extensive banditry, abduction, and livestock rustling, is a major problem for good governance and state legitimacy in Nigeria's North-West area. From 2015 to 2022, banditry in Zamfara caused 16,086 kidnappings, 9,490 deaths, and the relocation of more than 1.3 million people (ICG, 2022) [8]. This made it very hard for people to farm, go to school, and use public services (Mohammed *et al.*, 2024) [10]. These problems show how Nigeria's centralized security system fails to function very well, because it makes it harder for local governments to deal with dangers that are peculiar to their areas (Aghedo, 2014) [3]. Local government councils in Zamfara State are close to the communities that are affected and could help the state and society work together, but they do not have much administrative or financial freedom, which makes it hard for them to put in place localized security measures like community policing or peace committees.

Research on insecurity in Nigeria has generally concentrated on federal and state-level initiatives, with scant consideration to the role of local governance in conflict-affected areas (Onah, 2016; Mohammed *et al.*, 2024) [12, 10]. This disparity is significant, given decentralization theory indicates that empowering local authorities promotes governance responsiveness and strengthens democratic accountability (Faguet, 2014) [7]. Comparative evidence from Nigeria, such as

the efficacy of community policing in lowering crime in Lagos State, shows the potential of localized government systems to reduce security concerns (Titus & Ogundiya, 2023) [15]. However, the specific dynamics of local government autonomy in Zamfara's security governance remain unexplored, creating a significant gap in understanding how decentralised institutions might manage insecurity in fragile environments. This study analyses how improved local government independence can improve community-based security governance in Zamfara State, employing secondary information from government reports, academic literature, media, and NGO publications, complemented by modest key informant interviews. By assessing administrative and financial restrictions and applying comparative lessons from other Nigerian states, the research enriches knowledge on decentralization and governance in conflict zones, providing insights for policy reform in sub-Saharan Africa.

2. Literature review

The ongoing insecurity in Zamfara State, Nigeria, and its profound consequences for governance have sparked significant scholarly interest, yet the possibility for local government autonomy to handle this situation remains poorly unexplored. This analysis synthesizes the literature on insecurity in Zamfara State, public administration difficulties in Nigeria, comparative insights from local governance, and

pertinent theoretical frameworks, finding a crucial vacuum in the study of decentralized governance in conflict-affected settings.

Insecurity in Zamfara state

Zamfara State, based in Nigeria's North-West geopolitical zone, is grappling with an entrenched security crisis driven by banditry, kidnapping, and cattle rustling, which has ruined socio-economic stability and weakened state authority. Mohammed *et al.* (2024) ^[10] present a detailed analysis, noting that between 2015 and 2022, Zamfara recorded 16,086 abductions, 9,490 deaths, and 1,385,625 displacements due to banditry, largely affecting rural populations. These data reveal a humanitarian disaster, with entire villages abandoned and livelihoods disrupted. Abdullahi (2024) ^[11] details the impact on healthcare, stating that banditry inhibits access to maternal health treatments, adding to Zamfara State's high maternal mortality rate, estimated at 1,200 per 100,000 live births (UNICEF, 2023) ^[16]. Similarly, Yahaya and Bello (2022) ^[17] recount the breakdown of the education sector, with over 60% of school-age children out of school due to frequent abductions and school closures, such as the 2021 kidnapping of 279 schoolgirls in Jangebe. This educational interruption fosters a cycle of poverty and vulnerability, generating greater instability.

There are several underlying factors contributing to Zamfara's insecurity. Poverty and unemployment, impacting almost 70% of the state's population, constitute a fertile field for criminal recruitment (Mohammed *et al.*, 2024) ^[10]. Historical farmer-herder disputes, fuelled by competition over restricted land and water resources, have evolved into organized banditry, worsened by illegal gold mining activities in Zamfara State's mineral-rich districts (Okoli & Ugwu, 2019). Anka (2021) ^[4] emphasises how the state's porous borders with Niger and other surrounding nations encourage cross-border banditry and the influx of small guns, with smuggling networks running unchecked. Additionally, the breakdown of conventional conflict resolution processes, such as community discussions conducted by local leaders, has allowed banditry to expand into an advanced criminal enterprise (Suleiman, 2022) ^[14]. These studies underline the complexity of Zamfara's security concerns but mostly focus on its socio-economic ramifications and federal or state responses, overlooking the potential role of local governments in designing context-specific solutions.

Public administration and governance challenges in Nigeria

Nigeria's public administration system, which suffers from centralization and weak institutions, struggles to deal with localized insecurity, particularly in Zamfara State. Aghedo (2014) ^[3] believes that the centralized security system, which is largely administered by the Nigerian Police and federal agencies, is not particularly good at dealing with dangers that are peculiar to individual communities because of problems with bureaucracy, lack of training, and lack of community involvement. Local governments constitute the third level of

government, but they are typically left out since they fail to have the administrative or financial independence to establish or carry out security measures that match their particular situations (Onah, 2016) ^[12]. This centralization is evident in Zamfara State, where local authorities rely significantly on federal funds. State governments control more than 80% of their expenditures, making it tougher for them to deal with security issues (Mohammed *et al.*, 2024) ^[10].

Governance challenges, such as corruption and poor management, further hinder public administration's efficacy. Onah (2016) ^[12] claims that corruption is a fundamental driver of insecurity, as misallocated resources impair institutional solutions. In Zamfara State, the N6.09 billion cash transfer programme for vulnerable households in 2020, meant to alleviate poverty and reduce insecurity, was hampered by bureaucratic inefficiencies and claims of fund diversion, reaching just a fraction of its target beneficiaries (Mohammed *et al.*, 2024) ^[10]. Onwughalu (2022) emphasizes the state-society gap, emphasising that inadequate leadership and lack of accountability weaken public trust, impeding collaborative security initiatives. In Zamfara State, this divergence appears in the exclusion of communities from security planning, despite their awareness of local banditry networks (Yahaya & Bello, 2022) ^[17].

Non-kinetic techniques, such as social investment and economic development initiatives, have been recommended to address the socio-economic underpinnings of insecurity. Baba (2015) ^[5] pushes for automated farming to increase food security in Zamfara State, suggesting that agricultural development could reduce unemployment and banditry. However, insecurity and poor funding have hindered such endeavours, with less than 10% of planned agricultural projects realized between 2015 and 2020 (Baba, 2015) ^[5]. Mkhize *et al.* (2024) ^[9] advocate for "African solutions to African problems," which include locally driven anti-corruption and security programs that draw on indigenous knowledge and community structures. Yet, these studies rarely address how local governments, if provided greater authority, may operationalize such alternatives, revealing a key vacuum in the literature. The lack of economic and administrative devolution inhibits local councils' ability to engage populations, provide resources, or collaborate with traditional rulers, underlining the need for decentralized government approaches.

Comparative insights from local governance

Comparative evaluations of local administration in Nigeria provide persuasive evidence of the potential of decentralized techniques to promote security governance, offering lessons for Zamfara State. Titus and Ogundiya (2023) ^[15] analyse community policing in Lagos State, where local governments partnered with community leaders to build neighborhood watch programmes, reducing crime rates by 30% between 2018 and 2022. These projects succeeded by using local knowledge, creating trust, and integrating community volunteers into security systems. Similarly, Okoli and Iortyer (2014) ^[11] investigate local peace committees in Plateau State, which

fostered conversation between farmers and herders, lowering conflict events by settling land disputes and encouraging reconciliation. These committees empowered local governments to interact with traditional rulers, religious leaders and civil society, developing inclusive governance systems.

Further instances demonstrate the relevance of fiscal autonomy in allowing local security efforts. Adebayo (2020) ^[2] writes that in Kano State, local governments used discretionary monies to assist vigilante groups, like as the Hisbah, which augmented legitimate security personnel and increased communal safety. In contrast, Zamfara State's local administrations have severe financial restraints, with federal funding strictly controlled by the state government, limiting their ability to undertake similar programmes (Mohammed *et al.*, 2024) ^[10]. Additionally, research on Enugu State emphasise how local governments worked with civil society organizations to create early warning systems for conflict prevention, lowering communal violence through proactive community participation (Eze, 2021) ^[6]. These experiences indicate that administrative and financial autonomy enable local governments to adopt context-specific security measures, build confidence and enhance state-society engagement.

However, the relevance of these models to Zamfara's specific sociopolitical and security setting has not been examined. Zamfara State's issues, including extensive banditry, inadequate institutional capacity, and a history of centralized authority, differ dramatically from metropolitan Lagos or conflict-mediating Plateau. The literature lacks a thorough investigation of how Zamfara's local governments could use decentralized security models like community policing or peace committees to combat banditry and kidnapping, highlighting a major gap in understanding the importance of local autonomy in conflict governance.

3. Research gap

Despite the rich study on insecurity and public administration in Nigeria, numerous gaps continue. First, most studies focus on federal and state-level measures, overlooking the importance of local governments in security governance (Aghedo, 2014; Onah, 2016) ^[3, 12]. Second, while decentralization is extensively debated, its specific application to Zamfara State's security situation remains untested, with no studies examining how local government autonomy could strengthen community-based responses (Mohammed *et al.*, 2024) ^[10]. Third, the research lacks comparative evaluations of Zamfara State's local governance systems relative to other Nigerian states with successful decentralized security regimes (Titus & Ogundiya, 2023) ^[15]. This study addresses these gaps by looking at how increased local government autonomy can improve community-based security governance in Zamfara, using secondary data to make a new addition to the field of decentralization and conflict governance.

Theoretical framework

This study utilizes Decentralization Theory and Governance Theory to investigate the impact of local government autonomy

in strengthening community-based security governance in Zamfara State, Nigeria. These frameworks provide a rigorous lens for understanding how devolving power to local governments and encouraging state-society partnerships can handle localized insecurity in a conflict-affected context. Decentralization Theory, as defined by Faguet (2014) ^[7], asserts that moving administrative and financial responsibility from central to local governments promotes governance responsiveness and accountability. By encouraging local institutions to make context-specific decisions, decentralization enables specialised policy responses to local concerns, such as Zamfara State's banditry crisis. In Nigeria, centralized security systems have often failed to address region-specific risks due to bureaucratic ineffectiveness and a lack of local understanding (Aghedo, 2014) ^[3]. Decentralization theory proposes that allowing Zamfara State's local governments greater autonomy could enable them to deploy community-based security measures, such as local peace committees or community policing, utilising their proximity to impacted communities. This methodology is particularly useful for assessing how budgetary and administrative restrictions limit local governments' capacity and how devolution could increase their participation in security governance. Governance Theory, as defined by Pierre and Peters (2020) ^[13], emphasizes the necessity of state-society collaborations in effective policy implementation. It views governance as a collaborative process including state actors, communities, and non-state enterprises, encouraging trust and accountability. In Zamfara State, the state-society gap, compounded by weak leadership and centralized authority, has impacted security measures (Onwughalu, 2022). Governance theory proposes that empowering local governments to engage communities through inclusive methods like participatory security planning can bridge this gap, boosting the legitimacy and effectiveness of security operations. By integrating these theories, this study analyses how local government autonomy, reinforced by collaborative governance, might address Zamfara State's insecurity, presenting a theoretically informed analysis of decentralized security governance in a vulnerable context.

4. Methodology

In light of the region's insecurity and the accessibility of trustworthy historical sources, this study used a qualitative secondary data analysis supplemented by five key informant interviews to investigate how greater local government autonomy enhanced community-based security governance in Zamfara State, Nigeria. Comparative case studies of local security initiatives in Lagos and Plateau States, academic studies on local governance and insecurity, media and NGO reports from sources like Premium Times and the International Crisis Group, and government reports on budgets and security policies from the Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics and the Zamfara State Ministry of Local Government were examples of secondary data. Five electronic semi-structured interviews with security specialists and local government members corroborated secondary findings and offered perspective for

current situations. The data were studied using descriptive statistics for quantitative variables like budgets and crime rates, qualitative comparative analysis to compare Zamfara with other states, and content analysis with NVivo software to discover themes like autonomy and administrative impediments. Obtaining informed consent for interviews, respecting participant privacy, and cross-referencing sources to address potential biases in government and media articles were all instances of ethical practices. Limits included possible biases in media sources, which were addressed through cross-referencing, and limits in current secondary data, which were partially addressed by interviews. This approach gives a rigorous framework for examining how Zamfara's security governance is affected by local government autonomy.

5. Findings and analysis

This study investigated how improved local government autonomy promoted community-based security governance in Zamfara State, Nigeria, utilising qualitative secondary data analysis augmented by five key informant interviews. The findings, which were based on government reports, academic literature, media and NGO publications, and comparative case studies, revealed significant constraints on local government autonomy, identified administrative and financial barriers, highlighted lessons from other Nigerian states, and emphasised the importance of community engagement in security governance.

Current state of local government autonomy in Zamfara

The investigation indicated that local government councils in Zamfara State functioned with significantly limited administrative and financial autonomy, weakening their potential to address insecurity. Government data stated that over 80% of local government expenditures were controlled by the Zamfara State government, with federal allocations pumped through state authorities, leaving local councils with few discretionary cash (Mohammed *et al.*, 2024) ^[10]. This financial dependency limited their ability to launch security initiatives such as community policing or local vigilante groups. Administratively, local governments lacked decision-making authority over security policy, since federal and state institutions, particularly the Nigerian Police, dominated security planning (Aghedo, 2014) ^[3]. Key informant interviews showed that local government chairpersons were routinely excluded from state-level security meetings, restricting their involvement into policies tackling banditry and kidnapping. This centralisation marginalised local councils, despite their proximity to insecure communities, limiting responsive governance (Faguet, 2014) ^[7].

Barriers to effective security governance

Several administrative and budgetary constraints inhibited local governments' efficiency in Zamfara State's security governance. Financially, the lack of autonomous revenue streams required local councils to rely on inconsistent federal transfers, which were often delayed or redirected due to

bureaucratic ineffectiveness (Mohammed *et al.*, 2024) ^[10]. For instance, a 2020 state audit report showed that only 15% of allotted cash for local security programs reached Zamfara State's 14 local government areas, with the remaining left unaccounted for, implying incompetence or corruption (Zamfara State Ministry of Local Government, 2020) ^[18]. Administratively, local governments experienced capacity issues, including inadequate staffing and insufficient training, which hindered their ability to coordinate with communities or implement security initiatives. Interviews with local authorities found that most councils lacked dedicated security offices or qualified workers to supervise community-based programmes, further undermining their position. Media sources reinforced these findings, stating that banditry persisted in rural regions due to the absence of localized security tactics (International Crisis Group, 2022) ^[8]. These hurdles underlined the divergence between centralized policy and local demands, supporting the necessity for more autonomy (Onwughalu, 2022).

Comparative insights from other Nigerian states

Comparative analysis of local government-led security initiatives in other Nigerian states offered valuable lessons for Zamfara. In Lagos State, community policing efforts, supported by local government funding and coordination with neighborhood watch groups, reduced crime rates by 30% between 2018 and 2022 (Titus & Ogundiya, 2023) ^[15]. Local governments in Lagos leveraged fiscal autonomy to train and equip community volunteers, promoting trust and intelligence sharing. Similarly, in Plateau State, local peace committees promoted dialogue between farmers and herders, reducing conflict incidents by mediating land disputes and involving traditional rulers (Okoli & Iortyer, 2014) ^[11]. In Kano State, local governments used discretionary funds to support vigilante groups like the Hisbah, improving community safety (Adebayo, 2020) ^[2]. Interviews with security experts agreed that these models worked due to administrative devolution and community engagement, elements lacking in Zamfara. However, Zamfara's unique challenges, such as widespread banditry and weak institutional capacity, showed that direct replication of these models would require adaptation, such as integrating traditional leaders into security frameworks to address cultural dynamics (Suleiman, 2022) ^[14].

Role of community engagement

The results demonstrated that having the community involved is a critical part of successful security governance, and local government autonomy could help with that. Reports from the media and NGOs suggested that residents in Zamfara State had useful information regarding bandit networks, but state and federal officials rarely asked them for it (International Crisis Group, 2022) ^[8]. For instance, citizens in the Anka and Maru local government districts alerted local officials about bandit hideouts, but centralised security agencies often could not do anything because of delays in the bureaucracy. People who were interviewed indicated that local governments were able to

host community conversations, such the peace talks in Zurmi in 2019, which temporarily cut down on bandit assaults. These results were in keeping with governance theory, which suggests that partnerships between the government and society are vital for putting policies into action (Pierre & Peters, 2020) ^[13]. The study concluded that providing local governments greater latitude would allow them to set up formal institutions, such community security committees, to harness local expertise and establish trust, which would improve security governance.

Validation from interviews

The interviews with the five key informants confirmed secondary findings and provided in-depth understanding of local government dynamics. Two respondents attested to the serious budgetary limits, pointing out that funding for local security programmes was restricted by state-controlled budgets. A security professional underlined the efficacy of informal community conversations organised by local authorities and recommended that formalising them could boost results. In support of secondary evidence on understaffing, two additional officials stressed the requirement of training to boost administrative capacity. Despite their limitations, these interviews supported the constraints mentioned in secondary sources and illustrated how autonomy may increase local governments' participation in security governance in Zamfara.

Synthesis

The findings showed that inadequate local government autonomy in Zamfara State greatly hampered community-based security governance, with financial dependency, administrative deficiencies, and centralised control serving as key hurdles. Comparative experiences from Lagos, Plateau, and Kano revealed that devolving authority enabled effective, community-driven security measures, offering a possible path for Zamfara State if suited to its environment. Community participation has emerged as a vital instrument, with local governments well positioned to bridge state-society gaps if given more autonomy. These findings, anchored in decentralization and governance theories, underscored the urgent need for administrative and financial reforms to empower Zamfara State's local governments to tackle insecurity.

6. Discussion

The study's conclusions revealed the essential role that local government autonomy plays in promoting community-based security governance in Zamfara State, Nigeria, while also bringing attention to ongoing financial and administrative constraints that hinder efficient responses to insecurity. By applying the frameworks of Decentralization Theory (Faguet, 2014) ^[7] and Governance Theory (Pierre & Peters, 2020) ^[13] to analyse these findings, this discussion offers insights into potential solutions for conflict-affected regions by comparing Zamfara's challenges with those of other Nigerian states, examining the implications for public administration, and

addressing the impact of autonomy on security governance. According to the report, Zamfara's inadequate local government authority substantially impeded the efficacy of community-based security governance. The significant financial reliance, where the state controls more than 80% of municipal budgets, hindered councils' power to finance security measures like vigilante groups or community policing (Mohammed *et al.*, 2024) ^[10]. Despite being close to the impacted areas, local governments' role was administratively reduced by their exclusion from state-level security plans (Aghedo, 2014) ^[3]. The findings indicated that Zamfara's centralised security architecture did not take advantage of local knowledge, as shown by the inaction on bandit hideouts reported by the community (International Crisis Group, 2022) ^[8]. Decentralization Theory believes that delegating authority enhances responsiveness to local requirements (Faguet, 2014) ^[7]. This suggests that local governments might have been able to put in place customized safety measures with more administrative and financial autonomy, which would have been compatible with the theoretical predictions of decentralized governance.

Several common and distinct difficulties were identified through comparative comparison with other Nigerian states. Through the development of trust and local intelligence, community policing in Lagos was made possible by the economic autonomy of local governments, which resulted in a 30% decrease in crime (Titus & Ogundiya, 2023) ^[15]. Similar to this, Plateau's peace committees were successful because they included traditional leaders, which was a tactic appropriate for Zamfara's cultural setting (Okoli & Iortyer, 2014) ^[11]. However, unlike urbanized Lagos or the Plateau, which mediates conflicts, Zamfara presented particular challenges due to its pervasive banditry and lack of institutional ability. For example, interviews revealed that, in contrast to Kano's Hisbah-supporting councils, Zamfara's local councils lacked trained staff (Adebayo, 2020) ^[2]. These parallels demonstrated that whereas decentralisation made security governance possible in other places, Zamfara's high insecurity and centralised authority necessitated special adjustments, like incorporating traditional rulers into official security frameworks (Suleiman, 2022) ^[14]. The main obstacles were found to be financial and administrative. Systemic corruption and bureaucratic inefficiencies were mirrored in financial constraints, as demonstrated by the 2020 misallocation of 85% of local security expenditures (Zamfara State Ministry of Local Government, 2020) ^[18]. According to interviews, local councils' administrative ability to coordinate community-based initiatives was hampered by understaffing and a lack of training (Onwughalu, 2022). State-society partnerships are emphasized by governance theory (Pierre & Peters, 2020) ^[13], and the results demonstrated that Zamfara's state-society separation is caused by centralized control and inadequate community engagement. The potential of local government-led efforts was shown by successful community talks in Zurmi in 2019, indicating that formalizing systems such as community security committees through autonomy could help close this gap.

The effects for public management are enormous. The findings underscored the need for decentralization changes to empower local governments in Zamfara, consistent with Mkhize *et al.*'s (2024) ^[9] call for "African solutions to African problems." Increased fiscal autonomy might enable local councils to support community-driven security measures, while administrative reforms, such as capacity-building initiatives, could strengthen coordination with communities. These reforms would increase state-society engagement, building trust and legitimacy in governance, as observed in Lagos and Plateau (Titus & Ogundiya, 2023; Okoli & Iortyer, 2014) ^[15]. However, Zamfara State's particular setting needs culturally sensitive measures, such as mobilising traditional leaders, to achieve community buy-in (Suleiman, 2022) ^[14]. Potential remedies include legislative amendments to provide local governments greater authority over budgeting, limiting state meddling, and implementing training programmes to increase administrative capacity. Creating official community security committees, as recommended by interview respondents, might institutionalize state-society cooperation, utilising local knowledge to fight banditry. These ideas align with decentralization and governance theories, enabling a method to increase security governance in Zamfara State and other conflict-affected regions. Future research could explore quantitative impacts of autonomy on security outcomes or gender-specific perspectives in community engagement, addressing inadequacies in the current study.

7. Conclusion

Zamfara State, Nigeria, is plagued by banditry, kidnapping, and socio-economic disintegration. This study investigated how local government autonomy supports community-based security governance. Qualitative secondary data analysis and a few key informant interviews indicated that Nigeria's centralized governance design substantially inhibits Zamfara's local governments' ability to address localized security concerns. Even though they are tied to their communities and can collaborate, local councils cannot tackle their individual challenges because the state controls over 80% of their expenditures and security decisions. Decentralized governance systems work, as shown in Lagos, where community policing slashed crime by 30%, and Plateau, where local peace committees reduced farmer-herder confrontations. These examples illustrate that administrative and financial autonomy for local governments permits community-driven security solutions. However, Zamfara State's unique context—characterized by widespread banditry, weak institutional frameworks, and a reliance on centralized control—requires tailored approaches, such as incorporating traditional leaders into formal security structures to increase legitimacy and cultural relevance (Suleiman, 2022) ^[14]. Zamfara security governance needs decentralization, according to the findings. Greater autonomy will allow local governments to allocate resources to projects like community security committees, enhance collaboration with local stakeholders, and re-establish confidence between state officials and communities. Using

local skills to address insecurity more efficiently and sustainably could overcome the state-society gap.

Policy recommendations

The following suggestions are put forth in an effort to translate these findings into practical results:

- To provide Zamfara State's local governments more responsibility over their budgets and decision-making processes, legislative reforms ought to be recommended. This means providing councils more ability to generate and regulate their own revenue streams and diminishing state control over federal allocations. This fiscal empowerment would enable local governments to fund security initiatives that are tailored to the needs of their communities, such as installing early warning systems or local security guards.
- Following the successful models of Plateau and Lagos, Zamfara State should prioritise the formation of local peace or community security committees. To assure efficacy and openness, these organisations ought to be incorporated into regional governance structures, with clearly defined responsibilities, functions and accountability procedures. Capacity-building programmes should be implemented to teach community leaders and local officials how to manage these initiatives.
- It is vital to build up formalised security coordination forums with involvement from state security services, local government chairpersons, and traditional leaders. Frequent gatherings would assure that state-level plans are informed by local perspectives, boosting resource distribution and responsiveness to challenges particular to a community, such as hotspots for banditry.
- Traditional leaders ought to be formally incorporated in security governance structures like peace committees or community forums, recognising Zamfara State's cultural landscape. Their engagement can increase community involvement, strengthen the credibility of security measures, and give culturally appropriate responses to issues made worse by banditry.
- The quantitative implications of enhanced local government autonomy on security measures, including declines in crime or relocation, should be the focus of future research. Furthermore, analysing gender perspectives in community involvement could guarantee that security planning takes into consideration the contributions and needs of women, filling a vacuum in the literature.

Zamfara State can proceed towards a decentralized, community-focused security governance model by following these enquiries, allowing local governments the authority to address the underlying causes of insecurity. In addition to expanding knowledge of decentralization in conflict situations, this study offers policymakers in sub-Saharan Africa a useful road map for bolstering local institutions in dangerous environments.

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